

**Testimony of Gina Fafard**  
**Executive Director of the Interdistrict School of Arts and Communication**  
**Testimony submitted to the Education Committee**  
**March 15, 2013**

Chairpersons Stillman and Fleischmann, and respected members of the Education Committee, thank you for letting me testify before you today. I'm Gina Fafard, executive director of the Interdistrict School of Arts and Communication, also known as ISAAC, and I'm here to speak in support of HB 6622.

ISAAC is a state public charter school in New London that serves the 20 towns, cities and boroughs throughout Southeastern Connecticut. As an experiential learning community where students are challenged to discover their talents and strengths, we are now in our 15<sup>th</sup> year of providing a rich socially and culturally diverse educational experience with a foundational importance on music and art.

Our school is currently considering entering into an agreement with the New London public school district similar to what is being discussed here today. I'm happy to say that ISAAC and the district have shared a healthy relationship since our inception, and this agreement would be just the latest step in our continual collaboration.

With this agreement, ISAAC would begin sharing our performance scores with the district, and we would receive resource support in return. I cannot express enough how thrilled I would be to work with the district in this manner. As a small, independent charter school, funding and resources are a constant struggle. While this arrangement doesn't solve all our problems, it does allow us to focus more on what's most important – our students.

On the other hand, I think sharing our performance scores only stands to help the community as a whole. As I see it, we consider all of our district and charter school students as New London public school students. I believe this arrangement would be a step in the right direction in beginning to see us as one, unified district, a school district with educational options to better serve the diverse needs of our students.

There are already examples right here in Connecticut that we can point to in order to showcase how we hope this relationship will evolve. Recently, our friends at Achievement First and the Hartford school district won a large grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to improve professional development and student achievement. This grant was awarded to them because of the strong relationship they share together. It is my goal to bring that same kind of accomplishment to New London with our relationship with the district.

With this in mind, I encourage you to see the great opportunity before us and the impact it can have on our state and our children. I also urge you to vote in favor of HB 6622. Doing so will go a long way in helping to build upon the incredible education reform progress we've already made during the past few years.

Thank you again for letting me speak with you today, and thank you again for your time.